

Teen Kids News – FCC Credentials

Teen Kids News meets FCC requirements for “core children’s programming” by providing educational features such as, **“Flag Facts”** (info on our state flags); **“College and You”** (tips for choosing and getting into college), **“Word”** (vocabulary skills training), as well as informational features for teens, such as reports about healthy eating; driving tips for new drivers, and internet predators. The show has been designed to meet needs of children and young adolescents with a unique curiosity about their world. The Program stimulates the 13-16 year olds’ curiosity, develops their learning and cognitive, listening and thinking skills, and serves as an enhancement of their academic and educational experience.

More than 10,000 schools are using TKN as part of their school curriculum and affiliate stations have already contacted school systems in that regard. The full scripts are available to provide easy access for teachers to use in their classrooms.

Advocacy group Children Now says broadcasters follow letter, not spirit of FCC's educational/informational standards.

By John Eggerton -- Broadcasting & Cable, 11/12/2008

Advocacy group Children Now says that only one in eight kids TV shows offered up by broadcasters as meeting the educational/informational (E/I) requirements of the FCC meet "high quality" standards for educational shows, and it wants the FCC to make its educational guidelines stronger and clearer.

It also wants the commission to monitor compliance and respond "quickly" to public complaints (like those filed by Children Now). The group called on broadcasters to improve the quality and availability of kids shows, including applying the six key criteria to their offerings (see below). It also asked parents to become more involved in their kids' TV watching and to complain if they think an E/I-certified show is not sufficiently E/I.

Children Now concedes that broadcasters are meeting "the letter" of the law, airing three hours of E/I programming, and even applauds them for it. But the group asks whether "their efforts truly live up to the spirit" of the Children's Television Act and its children's programming requirements, overseen by the Federal Communications Commission.

The FCC essentially allows broadcasters to self-certify that their E/I programs meet FCC requirements, including that the shows have education as "a significant purpose," that they are at least a half hour, that they air between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. and that they air weekly.

That has produced some questionable, even embarrassing calls, like billing *The Flintstones* as a history lesson or a baseball pre-game show as educational because it teaches how to throw a curve ball.

TV stations are required to air at least three hours a week of educational/informational programming and to identify the shows to the FCC and in their public files.

The report, which is scheduled to be unveiled at a press conference in Washington Wednesday, at which FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein is scheduled to speak, looks at the "quality" of the shows offered up as educational, something the FCC reporting requirement does not address.

Children Now says it measured the shows according to six criteria:

1. clarity, meaning how explicitly is the educational element presented
2. integration, or how often the lesson is repeated
3. involvement, which means how engaging is the educational element
4. applicability, or how the lesson is connected to the real world
5. importance, meaning not how important to the story but how important is the lesson to children's development
6. positive reinforcement, or to what degree is learning rewarded.

Each show--120 episodes from 24 "representative markets" were analyzed--was given a up to three points in each category, with an 0-6 score labeled "minimally educational," a 7-10 score deemed moderately educational, and an 11 or 12 score considered highly educational. Media researchers Dale Kunkel of the University of Arizona and Kristin Drogos of the University of Illinois did the analysis.

By that measure, only 12 shows got the highest score, while 21 were minimally educational, with the rest getting the lowest score. Children Now also says most broadcasters are only doing the minimum three hours (59%).

Kunkel is a familiar figure to broadcasters. He is a long-time critic of broadcasters' children's programming and has testified numerous times about the need for more educational "educational" children's shows.

One station singled out with high marks was Raycom's MyNetworkTV affiliate in Honolulu, KFVE, which airs 5.5 hours per week, with shows like *Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego* and *Beakman's World*, and programming every day but Sunday.

The eight shows that were determined to be of the highest educational content were evenly divided among commercial and noncommercial shows with four apiece: *Sesame Street*, *Between the Lions*, *Cyberchase*, and *Fetch! With Ruff Ruffman* (PBS) and *Beakman's World*, *3-2-1 Penguins*, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, and ***Teen Kids News***.